

THE ORGANIZER

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Twin Cities IWW May Day Celebrations for 2009

The Twin Cities General Membership Branch of the IWW planned and executed an ambitious series of events over the weekend of May 1, 2, and 3 for the 2009 May Day celebration. We ended up marching in two parades, rallying in celebration both for workers and immigrant rights communities, and hosting a line-up of bands in a joint fund-raising event with Sisters' Camelot. Despite some setbacks, the Twin Cities GMB rose to the occasion and had a very successful weekend, increasing our visibility and showing our solidarity with allied organizations.

FRIDAY MAY 1 ALL OUT FOR THE ANTI-CAPITALIST BLOC!

On Friday, May 1 fellow workers from the GMB with their spouses, children and friends joined with the May Day Coalition organized by the Midwestern Immigrant Rights Action Coalition, also known as MIRAc. Members of the GMB worked with members of MIRAc in some of the planning sessions leading up to the event.

With their main statement of "Since 1889, We Stand United in Celebration of International Worker's Day" MIRAc's "March and Community Festival to Commemorate and Celebrate Mayday!" for 2009 was the fourth year of the event. The march and festival's strong focus remains on Latino brothers and sisters while developing, in the words of the Resource Center for the Americas, "a diverse environment where we can be inspired by and learn from a variety of groups and forces that are working to create a more just, beautiful and dignified community for everyone!" Indeed, each

year the parade and festival continually grows in diversity and celebration.

At the March GMB meeting, we discussed participation in the MIRAc May Day celebration and a fellow worker said that he wanted

with very poor eyesight. Ironically, the Minneapolis Star and Tribune featured the flags of the Anti-capitalist Bloc in the business section of the paper the very next day, in an article about the "difficulties" the Starbucks Worker's Union is making for the bosses.

The Star Tribune article increased visibility for the Twin Cities GMB and despite its anti-union perspective (surprise!), it still served to draw attention to the ongoing labor issues arising from the current economic situation.

Plans were formalized by the branch to continue our GMB tradition of sponsoring an Anti-capitalist Bloc for the march. A formal call for community participation was drafted in compelling and eloquent form by a FW. In solidarity with the MIRAc demands, the Anti-capitalist Bloc called for a five point

platform outlining principles of solidarity:

1. ABOLITION OF CAPITALISM

We seek to abolish capitalism in favor of a system based on direct and democratic control of the means of production. The poverty, warfare, oppression and environmental devastation that are inherent in the capitalist system can only be ended by eliminating

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to see "hundreds of red and black flags at the march." The better to put true fear into the hearts of the parasitic oligarchs who are bleeding our economic system dry? So, another fellow worker decided to make this dream a reality! While not numbering in the hundreds, we did deliver nearly 40 red and black flags, including two large five foot banners on eight foot flag poles which can be seen even by bosses

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THE ORGANIZER

A monthly publication of the Twin Cities General Membership Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World.

The IWW is a union for all workers, dedicated to organizing on the job for better conditions today, and a world without bosses tomorrow.

You are invited to contact the Branch Secretary-Treasurer or any Delegate listed below for no-pressure conversations about your issues on the job.

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Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed are not necessarily the official position of the local branch or the union as a whole.

Many of our members are engaged in active organizing campaigns, and some use an alias, occasionally their union card number, or 'x' number. We prefer transparency over secrecy whenever possible, but will always honor requests for anonymity.

Editorial

I.W.W. troubador and "Golden Voice of the Southwest" U. Utah Phillips, who died in 2008, had a motto: "The long memory is the most radical idea in America."

Connected to that, he was also fond of saying that the I.W.W. was the only organization of which he'd been a part, that had never broken faith with its elders. Of all the wonderful words to come out of Utah's mouth, those were the ones of which I was perhaps most proud. The intergenerational nature of our union, where fellow workers mingle as fellow workers and equals, and learn from each other's experiences, has a great deal to do with our ability to persevere. The elder generation is not the only one that must be wel-

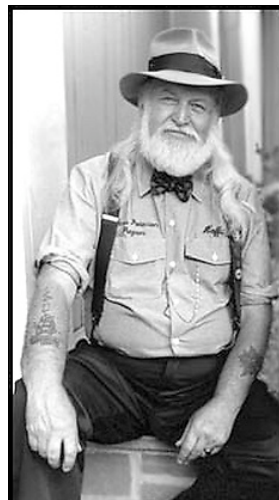
comed and listened to in our union - children and parents must also be accommodated. Most fellow workers will have children at some point - their need for organization doesn't disappear with the increase in their childrearing duties.

So I'd like to honor one man who has just passed away. He was never a member of the IWW, but he rubbed elbows with a lot of New York wobblers as a young man and considered himself a working class radical most of his life.

My father-in-law died a few days before this last May Day, which would have been his ninetieth birthday. Karl Leone was the son of working-class Sicilian immigrants and grew up in New York city in neighborhoods where he was the minority. His neighborhood was primarily composed of working class Jews who spoke Yiddish; so he learned Yiddish and spoke it to some extent to the end of his life. As a young man he

hired on at Jewish resorts in the Catskills. He served in the military during World War II in the Airborne and then attended dental school on the GI Bill.

In 1949 he was present at the riot at Mohegan Lake. Black activist, singer, and actor Paul Robeson gave a concert there (near the industrial center of Peekskill, New York), and joined a spontaneous crowd of union activists and fellow workers to protect Robeson against the organized vigilantes who had promised to murder him if he dared show his face at the concert.



During the redbaiting of the fifties he was asked to sign a loyalty oath and to declare any connection to communist

organizations - he refused in earthy terms, and received his honorable discharge after a lengthy struggle.

He married a Jewish woman and had two daughters, and over a long and quiet career he paid for both daughters to finish college, and then watched his wife and one daughter fall to cancer. After a period as a widower, he married my wife's mother and befriended her during her late adolescence.

I only met Karl late in life, and wish I'd known him longer - as it was I was privileged to learn a great deal of history from him, with a very particular perspective. One of the few things I was able to teach him was that the nearly mythical I got familiar with his continued passion for justice, his refusal to accept undeserved privilege, and his anger at oppression. He'll stay with me in my memory, as well as in the memory of my wife and my two children.

— FW Errico Hedake

Fire in Greece part. I

It has now been approximately six months since a social rebellion erupted in Greece December 9th 2008, after the police murdered a fifteen-year old in Athens. I use the word “erupted” with great care since the mainstream capitalist media has worked to present the rebellion as if it emerged all-of-a-sudden from a void, sparked merely by outrage in response to police violence and frustration about the lagging economy. The rebellion “erupted,” yes, but only because the fire had already been built – through a strong radical labor movement, student movement, immigrants rights movement/anti-fascist movement, through social centers and squats, through independent radical media, and through the networks and solidarity built through many years of struggle. Without this, no spark could have generated the fires – both literally and figuratively – that emerged in Greece in December 2008.

The flames spread through neighborhoods and communities, through schools and workplaces, through networks and through electronic communication. The movement never consisted of isolated activists or anarchists acting alone in the streets, rather, many youth and workers became radicalized (or re-radicalized) through popular struggle. Greece has a strong right-wing, fascist movement, yet in general the population supported and were imperative to the rebellion. There were certainly folks acting in the streets who just wanted to destroy things and did not care about having popular support (and I’m not saying their rage is illegitimate), but in general folks specifically targeted the state, corporations, and fascists, and sought to work to bring people into the struggle by spreading occupations and popular assemblies.

People worked hard to create new solidarities and relationships born in mutual struggle and support, and to increase their control over their own lives. Struggle is not only about attack and the creation of points of rupture, but it is also the creation of new possibilities, new ideas, and new relationships so that space of rupture does not disappear as quickly as it was created.

Destruction can be a creative act, but it is never sustainable without continual creation. A communiqué from December signed “girls in revolt” described the process of revolt as

“This incomprehensible, unpredictable convulsion of social rhythms, of the broken time/space, of the structures structured no more, of the border between what

is and what is to come. A moment of joy and play, of fear, passion, and rage, of confusion and some consciousness that is grievous, dynamic and full of promises. A moment which, regardless, will either frighten itself and preserve the automations that created it or will deny itself constantly in order to become at each moment something different than what it was before: all in order to avoid ending up at the causality of revolts suffocated in normality, revolts becoming another form of



authority while defending themselves...We are what we do in order to change who we are. We want this historical moment to adopt the content we have set for ourselves and not the meanings from which it can escape overnight.”

We saw this process of both revolt and creation, of new ways of being and relating, new solidarities unfold in Greece as the rebellion spread. People created communities together in autonomous spaces, they created room for new articulations, and new solidarities as immigrants, workers, farmers, prisoners, feminists, etc. struggled together and supported one another.

The Haunt of Albanian Migrants, in a statement titled “These days are ours, too” was one of the first to articulate both their solidarity and their own experiences, needs, and

desires in what originally seemed to be a riot of students. Their presence and their own struggle, as with many others, in turn spread and strengthened the revolt and further transformed both the meanings and the potential of the struggle. The struggle against the police state, the right-wing, and for autonomy and means of self-support was theirs as much as the students and/or the anarchists, as they asserted, and their self-organizing and self-articulation strengthened rather than diluted the rebellion.

The “girls in revolt” point out that it was state violence toward a “good,” innocent middle-class white youth that sparked the rebellion and the widespread support of anger toward an injustice. If Alex had been an immigrant, a working class woman, queer, or someone who was differently-abled, for example, then the incident would not have generated such popular outrage. Yet despite the source of the spark, the rebellion itself created new spaces for articulations such as those of the “Haunt of Albanian Migrants” and the “girls in revolt,” and new solidarities across intersectional oppressions.

The “girls in revolt” supported the rebellion, but they critically asserted within the movement the validity of many forms of “militancy” and “revolt” and questioned the patriarchal authority of both the police and those who fight them in the streets. They argue that “moral order and male sovereignty” are the prerogative of the state and the figure of the police officer, yet “if the rebels need to muster up their masculinity in order to fight the cop, they need to question it at the same time because it constitutes the authority they use to fight the cop.”

It is these critical discussions,
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The Starbucks Workers Union on its Fifth Anniversary

Last month marked five years since baristas at a Starbucks in New York City announced their membership in the Industrial Workers of the World and launched a campaign open to employees throughout the company. A worker-led organizing effort with the legendary IWW at the world's largest coffee chain could have been a flash in the pan? brilliant and inspiring, but brief. But a fire was lit and a movement began. The idea that Starbucks workers could organize themselves and speak in their own voice, independent of company executives and union bureaucrats, could not be restrained.

The bosses did their best to defeat us, to bury any indication of our existence under a heap of lies and retaliatory firings. They tried to stamp us out, even as the campaign for secure jobs and a living wage burst from New York into Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and beyond.

While Starbucks used the economic crisis as a pretext for an all-out assault on our already meager standard of living, our struggle gained momentum this year amidst a stark decline of the company's brand and widespread store closures. Baristas around the country and around the world made the decision to organize and fight back against severe cuts in work hours, chronic under staffing, and a new "Optimal Scheduling" program which forces many workers to be available to Starbucks for over 80 hours a week without being guaranteed a single work hour.

This journey has been full of set-backs and tests of will. Progress has been made yet much remains to be done. But one thing is certain: our voice for dignity is firmly planted and our union's future is bright.

The biggest battles remain ahead, but every day our ranks deepen. We are confident in our solidarity and could not be more proud to be associated with our fellow workers across the IWW and like-minded unionists around the world. This year, courageous baristas in Chile became the first Starbucks workers in Latin America to raise a union banner.

The corporate-controlled economic, social, and political model has been exposed everywhere as a failure for working families. And everyday workers are bolder and more assertive in the fight against injustice and exploitation. The notion that democracy has no place at work has been exposed as a lie.

To every worker who loves liberty: this is our time!

Together we organize. Together we struggle. Together we win!

Where there's smoke... Anarchism after the RNC

I. We've got the numbers, they've got the guns..

Our chants reverberated under the St. Paul skyway. The 2008 RNC protests were underway, the culmination of two years of anarchist/anti-authoritarian organizing materializing before our eyes. For once, we were many, and they were few... or maybe not. With 3500 cops and an uncounted number of National Guardsmen and Secret Service agents on the streets, this time they had both the guns and the numbers.

Overwhelming force was only one element of the state's repression strategy. The main hub of direct action coordination— the RNC

onry. The state imposed a high cost on expressing dissent.

II. The Strategy of Tension

Such a brutal reaction might lead us to believe that 'we must be doing something right.' After all, where there's smoke, there's fire, right? We must really pose a threat. Why else would the FBI and lord knows what other agencies put so many resources into crushing our protest?

No doubt, the prospect of a major political convention being delayed or cancelled due to protest activity would be extremely embarrassing for the ruling elites. However, we must also be aware of the way that the capitalist class uses threats to the existing order



Welcoming Committee— had been infiltrated by at least one undercover cop and two paid informants almost a year prior. On Friday night, the hammer came down with a raid on the St. Paul Convergence Center. Cops busted in the doors with guns drawn, forcing about 100 people to the ground, zip-tying them, and then photographing everyone and taking IDs. What a start to the weekend...

The next morning, I got a call from a friend alerting me that the cops were raiding anarchist houses across south Minneapolis. Eventually, four houses had been raided, and eight members of the Welcoming Committee jailed. Over the next week, over 800 people would be arrested in conjunction with the protests. Many would be injured by rubber bullets, concussion grenades, tear gas, pepper spray, and other weap-

to legitimize the violence with which it maintains its hold on the planet. The experiences of the Italian left in the 1970s provide valuable historical lessons for today's radical movements.

In the 1970s, the Italian state, backed by the United States government, faced a massive social insurgency that threatened the stability of capitalism. In response to the rise of autonomous movements of workers, women, students, youth, and pretty much everyone else, the state launched a campaign of terror. In 1969, the Piazza Fontana was bombed in a 'false flag' attack, killing 17 people and injuring 88. The attack was attributed to anarchists, although it had in fact been planned by neofascists with the support of US covert operatives. Their goal was to delegitimize the left, stem the tide of social insurgency, and

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Mayday Festivities, continued from page 1
that system.

2. DIRECT ACTION AND DIRECT DEMOCRACY

We believe that the mass direct action of the working class and its allies, working through democratic organizations, can abolish the capitalist system. We reject the notion that we should wait for politicians, elected or otherwise, to accomplish our goals on our behalf.

3. SOLIDARITY WITH ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE

We honor the struggles and experiences of all oppressed peoples, whether their oppression is based on race, sex, gender, disability, age, sexual identity or other social constructs. We know that defeating capitalism requires the solidarity of all oppressed peoples, and we commit ourselves to organizing in ways that do not recreate the hierarchies we resist.

4. INTERNATIONALISM

We reject national borders and nation-states as artificial barriers. We support no action or ideology that separates the working classes of the world, encouraging them to ignore each other at best, exploit each other most of the time, and kill each other at worst.

5. ORGANIZING

We will build networks of solidarity to organize and effectively support community struggles in our neighborhoods, workplaces and cities. Protest is not enough. We participate in the Anti-Capitalist Bloc in order to promote and move toward our goal of a just and democratic world free from the disease of capitalism.

With these principles in mind, we gathered with the Twin Cities community and added our voice to the demands for no more raids and deportations, legalization for all, and yes to the Employee Free Choice Act! The march was to begin at 4 pm, however, on the day of the event, we were informed that the site for the festival, about a mile from the march commencement site, was not going to be available until 5:30. The march therefore was delayed, but this probably helped the high turnout for the event. Unofficial estimates of the numbers attending the march were as high as 400 to 500 people. Demands for the current year focused on issues of importance to immigrant communities and workers of all communities. The Festival hosted a stage with performances by music groups and political and community performances. Wobblies sponsored a table for the festival after the march as well.

While there were some experiences of some overzealous parade marshaling by volunteers at the event, this may have arisen from the fact that the MIRAC/May Day Coalition organizers did not have a city permit for the march. Rather, they were able to convince Minneapolis police to provide an escort in the interest of public safety. So, we marched, we chanted, we brought our beautiful red and black flags and our GMB banner. Peo-

ple had fun and we had a great photo op in the local news print.

SATURDAY MAY 2

YOU'VE GOT TO FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT TO ONE BIG MAYDAY PARTY

For event number two on the Wobbly May Day Extravaganza, FWs planned an IWW joint fundraiser with Sisters' Camelot, with 14 bands, food and drink at an all-ages show to take place on Saturday, May 2. For those who may not be acquainted with the organization, Sisters' Camelot is a collective that distributes free, healthy food and dry goods to neighbor-



hoods all over the Twin Cities. SC is also dedicated to Mutual Aid and has long lent their resources to activist groups, labor unions, neighborhood groups, or other non-profits.

Despite a last-minute change of venue prompted by fire code inspection issues, the Saturday, May 2 show and fundraiser with Sisters' Camelot was a success. FWs had planned on a lineup to last from 5:30 pm until 2:00 am. But on Thursday, April 30, only two days before the event, organizers with Sisters' Camelot let us know that they were "having a sudden and unexpected issue" with the Minneapolis fire department. One wonders if this were a Chamber

of Commerce or some other such pro-capitalistic event if the supposed code violations would even be an problem. Nonetheless, even under this short notice, GMB organizers were able to secure a new space for the music event and went forward with an abbreviated lineup of bands.

SUNDAY MAY 3

BETWEEN THE PIGS AND THE MANURE...

For the third event of the weekend, Twin Cities GMB participated in the 35th annual Heart of the Beast May Day parade and festival. The parade has been a Twin Cities tradition since 1974 with the goal of highlighting environmental and social justice issues. Since 2009 is the 75th anniversary of the 1934 Teamsters' strike in Minneapolis, we were told that the HOTB organizers wanted to especially include Labor as a contingent in the parade. The 2009 parade theme celebrated "the great merging of the human social justice movements with the environmental movements to remember humans as responsible relatives of the earth." The FW who served as point person for the event put in many hours over the three weeks leading up to the parade, organizing the event and attending meetings with the section heads for the portion of the parade story in which the IWW was invited to participate. She also rallied the people to come and join in paper mache artistry to create our beautiful, ten-foot long Sabrina the Sabo Cat.

All in all, May Day 2009 was a great success. We worked hard and had a lovely time, and many thanks go out to all our fellow workers, with special gratitude and recognition to FW A.V., Parsons and Joel for your planning and vision.

— The 11th Avenue Free Writers Guild

GDC Local 6 Rallies for Professor Rancourt's Reinstatement

The University of Ottawa fired Denis Rancourt, a physics professor, renowned researcher, and IWW member on March 31, 2009, while he was speaking at an academic freedom conference in New York City.

The university sought to dismiss him on the basis that he had awarded high grades to a graduate level physics class, which Rancourt says he did in order to remove competition and performance as they are obstacles to learning. The university claimed that Rancourt's marking damaged the institution's credibility as an academic institution.

Rancourt has said that the university's board fired him before an April 1 deadline to submit a legal brief in his defense and that it ignored his submission of his students' exams as proof that he was evaluating students properly. The university disregarded the union's collective agreement and the grievance procedure by firing Rancourt without allowing him due process in his defense.

The Association of Professors (APUO), a registered trade union that represents university faculty, has announced it will launch an inquiry and it will likely appeal the firing in court.

The IWW General Defense Committee Local 6 is calling for all workers—especially education workers—to take a stand for Denis Rancourt. For more information, visit <http://uofowatch.blogspot.com>.

— FW Peter Moore

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self-awareness, and an openness to the processes of becoming (rather than merely refusing) that productively complicate and extend what might otherwise merely be a short-lived manifestation of a limited rage in response to a particular instance or from only a certain sector of society (students, immigrants, feminists, farmers, etc.) into a generalized state of rebellion that has lasting effects after the windows are replaced and the fires in the dumpsters have run out of fuel. This is revolt as a process of creation, be it dialogues, ideas, relationships, networks, autonomous communities, forms of mutual aid, social spaces, or organizations.

Part Two: The Fire Smolders

Part two will examine specifically the role of students and workers, of what worked and what didn't (in my opinion), of what has happened since the rebellion died down, and where things stand today.

— FW Parsons

International Workers' Day

In its earliest form, Mayday celebrated fertility and the resurgence of spring. With this ancient celebration falling on May 1st, it fits that Mayday today celebrates international solidarity among workers and the resurgence of the working class. Most of the world now recognizes the importance of May Day, to commemorate and proclaim the value of the struggles of the workers of the world. The United States, however, does not recognize May Day. Instead, in the United States, May 1st is called "Law Day" and "Loyalty Day." Labor Day in the US comes in the Fall. Though the seeds of May Day first took root in the United States, May Day as a celebration of working people's dignity and determination is not legally recognized here.

In the decades before the US Civil War, workers began to demand an eight hour workday. Bosses commonly required workers to labor ten, twelve, or even fourteen hours a day—often seven days a week. The war put things on hold for a few years, but those demands intensified soon after the war ended. Radical worker groups such as the Knights of Labor and The International Working People's Association were gaining power and influence in the working class. These groups and others mobilized workers around the notion of an eight hour workday. Between 1883 and 1885, the United States experienced a significant economic recession. By 1885, a quarter million American workers were on strike or locked out of their workplaces. This fueled the renewed demands for an eight hour workday.

Attempts to convince politicians to legislate the eight hour day were unsuccessful, so in 1884, The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (the predecessor of the AFL) set May 1st, 1886 as the date on which workers would themselves bring about the eight hour day through a general strike.

On May 1st, 1886, organized workers at The McCormick Harvesting Machine Company plant in Chicago began a three day general strike. After Chicago police murdered four of those workers, the workers called a rally for the next day (May 4th) at Haymarket Square. Chicago police began to break up the demonstration near the end of that rally. While they entered the crowd, someone threw a pipe bomb into the police line, killing an officer. The police rioted, and began firing into the crowd, killing several others - both demonstrators and police.

Several anarchist leaders were arrested and charged with the murder of the police officer killed by the pipe bomb. What little evidence existed indicated that it was the Pinkerton Detective Agency, a group of private police hired by the bosses, who instigated the violence by planting the bomb. Nevertheless, four of the anarchist workers were publicly executed. We know as "The Haymarket Affair".

In 1889, the Second International, a coalition of socialist and labor parties, mostly from Europe, met in Paris. American Federation of Labor (AFL) president Samuel Gompers wrote a letter to the workers of the Second International, informing them that the AFL was planning on a general strike for May 1st of 1890. He suggested they fight for the eight hour work day internationally, for all workers. Largely as a tribute to the Haymarket Martyrs, the Second International voted to declare May 1st as "International Worker's Day"...now more commonly known around the world as May Day.

In The United States, politicians and bosses have tried to ignore or bury the real meaning of May Day. The US government declares May 1st "Law Day." When the paranoia of the Cold War began, both chambers of the US Congress declared May 1st "Loyalty Day."

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push the government to declare a state of emergency in which the left could be crushed.

In the wake of the bombing, the state arrested 4000 people, many of them anarchists. This was the first in a series of over 140 bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, beatings, and other assaults perpetrated by the state and neofascist right in order to demonize the left. This was dubbed the "Strategy of Tension." The objective is to render the cultural environment impervious to social movement organizing by discrediting, and then eliminating the interventionist left. To borrow a phrase from counterinsurgency strategy, the Strategy of Tension 'drains the swamp,' raising the stakes for participation in social struggles, leaving only the most hard core activists alone on the field of battle where they can be easily targeted and destroyed. The ensuing defense work serves to distract activists from actual struggles, forcing them to devote time, energy, and money to bailing comrades out of jail.

III. Comrade p.38

In spite of the machinations of reactionary forces, the social antagonism in Italy expanded into an unbridgeable chasm. The 1970s witnessed an outbreak of down-right social war. Beginning with the "Hot Autumn" of worker unrest in 1969, the Italian movement crescendoed through the "Years of Lead" of the 70s, reaching an earsplitting climax in 1977 as overlapping waves of factory and university occupations and urban insurrections pushed the state to the brink of collapse. However, the strategy of tension was not without impact

Intl. Workers Day, from page 6

May 1st is even "Satire Day." But the histories and struggles of workers are not deemed worthy of commemoration. Instead, we get "Labor Day". It's interesting how different the words "labor" and "worker" really are. For the bosses, labor is nothing more than an expense—not unlike electricity, machinery, or transportation. And when we talk today about "organized labor," we mean business unions, usually just another plank in the corporate arsenal used against working women and men.

Joe Hill wrote in *Workers of the World, Awaken!* :

Workers of the world, awaken!
Rise in all your splendid might
Take the wealth that you are making,
It belongs to you by right.
No one will for bread be crying
We'll have freedom, love and health,
When the grand red flag is flying
In the Workers' Commonwealth.

The bosses and the trade unions can keep Labor Day for picnics and a final trip to the cabin before Autumn arrives. We can't and won't let them obscure the real meaning of May Day: International WORKER'S Day!

— FW Bob Adams

within the movements. A split developed in the pro-revolutionary milieu around the question of violence.

On one side were the proponents of mass organization and mass violence, the friends of "Comrade P 38," as we can call them. They favored self-defense of the movement on the broadest possible basis. The leading theorist of this wing of the movement were the intellectuals clustered around Antonio Negri and the other 'Autonomists.' The movement coalesced into a galaxy of collectives, workplace committees, small political parties, campaigns, free radio stations, and other autonomous direct action initiatives that was termed the "Area of Autonomy" or Autonomia. Participants in Autonomia were by and large ready to defend themselves in battles with police that occurred at every major demonstration. It was not uncommon for one or two people to be left dead in the street after a protest or strike. In self-defense, some autonomists carried the P 38 revolver, which was cheaply available on the black market. When the pigs fired on the people, the people answered in kind. However, violence never became the focus of the movement. The emphasis remained on building mass organizations to expand human freedom.

On the other side of the split were the Red Brigades and other hierarchical, closed armed formations. For them, the armed struggle was more than defense, it was a revolutionary strategy in itself. Their organization was the mirror of the state. Through their violence, the state no longer needed provocateurs or false flag attacks. The actions of the Brigades alienated much of the working class base of the movements and provided plenty of rationale for the inevitable crackdown.

The Brigades strategy of armed struggled fit neatly within the state's own strategy of tension. In 1979, the Italian state arrested all the leading figures of the Autonomist project, including Negri and the proponents of the

mass, participatory movement. Negri and others were then framed as the intellectual authors, or even as the leaders, of the Red Brigades.

Caught between the forces of the state on one side, and the advance of an armed, hierarchical left on the other, the autonomous movements of 1970s Italy lost popular support and were crushed by a wave of mass arrests. It took over a decade for the left to recover.

III. from smoke...

There are lessons to be learned from the experience of Italy. Specifically, we need to be more deliberate in placing tactics within a strategy to reach a goal. The two wings of the Italian movement shared the same goal: the abolition of capitalism and the state. However, they chose different tactics to realize that goal.

In the case of the Red Brigades, their tactics ended up playing into the hands of the state, touching off a wave of repression that the left was unprepared for, pushing the possibility of revolution even farther into the future. The state was able to place the Red Brigades' strategy within its own, making the actions of the Brigades into the motor of their own destruction.

We need to turn the strategy of tension upside down. We must develop a form of antipolitical judo, making the actions of the state into a motor for the growth of our movements. Currently, when we go on the offensive as a small minority, the state cracks down with the approval of the public. The state frames their actions as defense against a small number of terrorists or 'criminal anarchists' who endanger the public welfare. Only when non-anarchists are caught up the crossfire do we hear anything about the state "going too far."

We cannot depend on the police making mistakes in order to make our point or to delegitimize the state. We must build a broad base of solidarity so that an injury to

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Smoke, continued from previous page

one is truly an injury to all. The state must know that when they strike one, they strike one million. We must defend victims of state repression, such as the RNC 8. However, the only real deterrent to repression is the support and solidarity of autonomous mass organizations. More importantly, this kind of revolutionary base is the only force that will have the actual power to abolish the capitalist system while ending the racism, sexism, homophobia, and national chauvinism that plague the world.

IV. ...to Fire

Today's anarchist movement is teetering dangerously between irrelevancy and insanity. We must reject the choice between suicidal adventurism and standing on the sidelines of history. Finance capitalism is collapsing before our eyes. Social tensions thought long-resolved are again tightening. The atmosphere cracks with crisis. Let us not miss this opportunity to radicalize millions.

How can we participate in this historical moment to nudge the world toward revolution? In the United States, we are ill-prepared to answer this question. Most anarchists have played little meaningful role in any major movement in almost a decade. Most anarchists practically stood by watching during the largest anti-war protests in history in 2003. In 2006, most anarchists had virtually nothing to contribute to the largest workers movement in decades, as millions of immigrant workers stepped out of the shadows and into the streets.

For our own benefit, and for the future of this planet, we must begin engaging with our coworkers, neighbors, classmates, and acquaintances to build the kind of power we will need to overthrow the state, seize the means of production, and handle the repression that comes down as we do so. We have as much to learn as we have to teach, but either way, we have a role to play.

We need to begin the work of building a revolutionary social bloc, a coalition of grassroots, autonomous mass organizations based in neighborhoods, homes, schools, and workplaces, fighting for self-determination. In some places this means joining existing organizations, in other places it means building new ones.

Many anarchists would love to participate in a revolutionary movement of the broad masses, but lack the vision, hope, or skills to get from point A to point B. We need to look for lessons from other times, places, and movements for how to participate radically in mass movements.

We don't have to look far into the past for examples. In Europe, Africa, and even the United States, organizations like the Spanish CNT, the Italian FdCA, the Irish WSM, the North American WSA, and others continue a rich tradition of engaged revolutionary anarchism the winds its way through many of the major struggles of the last century. But we may be able to draw the greatest inspiration from South America. Many are familiar with the powerful autonomous movements that have rocked South America over the last decades: the Pi-

queteros and reclaimed factories in Argentina, Landless Peasants Movement in Brazil, the fight against water privatization and for indigenous rights in Bolivia, to name a few. The role of Anarchists in these movements is less widely known.

In Latin America, Anarchists have developed a praxis of involvement in social movements that they call "Especifismo." The mainstay of Especifismo is the belief that anarchists must form a "specifically" Anarchist organization to formulate and enact a common strategy of engagement with society. This engagement is called "social insertion," which means that the Anarchist organization joins non-Anarchists in mass struggle or mass organizations around common interests. These struggles can include strikes, rent strikes, struggles for control of the land, struggles against the police and gentrification, struggles against sexism, for the right to abortion, against bus fare increases, or any other issue that angers working people and moves them to act.

In the struggles, Anarchists put forward viable proposals and ideas based on an anti-authoritarian, anti-statist approach to organizing.

As struggles are won, regular people gain more power against the bosses and the state. Those who are oppressed within the working class build their own autonomous organizations, fighting for the specific demands of women, queers, people of color, immigrants, indigenous, students, youth, the disabled, and other groups. Contradictions emerge, conflicts occur, the movement grows stronger.

This is not nearly as sexy as shutting things down and getting branded as a terrorist, but over the long-term, this patient, conscientious approach is the only way to lay the basis for revolution in the United States itself.

VI. Forward

We should not have any regrets as a movement. Over the last decades, North American Anarchists have kept the flame of libertarian

revolution alive amidst widespread liberalism and complacency. But it is no longer enough to keep the flame going. It's time for a regroupment. The time has come to build new organizations based on a commitment to participation in mass social struggles as Anarchists. Only within popular movements do we have the power to build a new world. As the social conflagration in Greece, rioting in China, and other recent events demonstrate, there is a new opportunity to build a mass movement against capital and the state. The contradictions are sharpening.

Capitalism is becoming a tinderbox. Anarchists must now live up to our ideals.

It's time to set the world on fire.

— Criminal Syndicalist

[Editors' Note: This article was anonymously distributed on the internet last month and is reprinted here because of the IWW's involvement in the RNC protests. The IWW does not endorse or reject these opinions because of its non-ideological stance on political groups.]



Upcoming Events.

Organizer Training July 13 & 14, 4-10 PM

Come learn from experienced IWW organizers how to build solidarity in your workplace. Macalester College, email unravelme1@gmail.com for more information.

General Membership Branch Meeting August 4 at 7 PM

Monthly business meeting for the IWW Twin Cities General membership Branch. Come vote on where your dues are spent! All members have a vote. Mayday Books, 301 Cedar Ave.